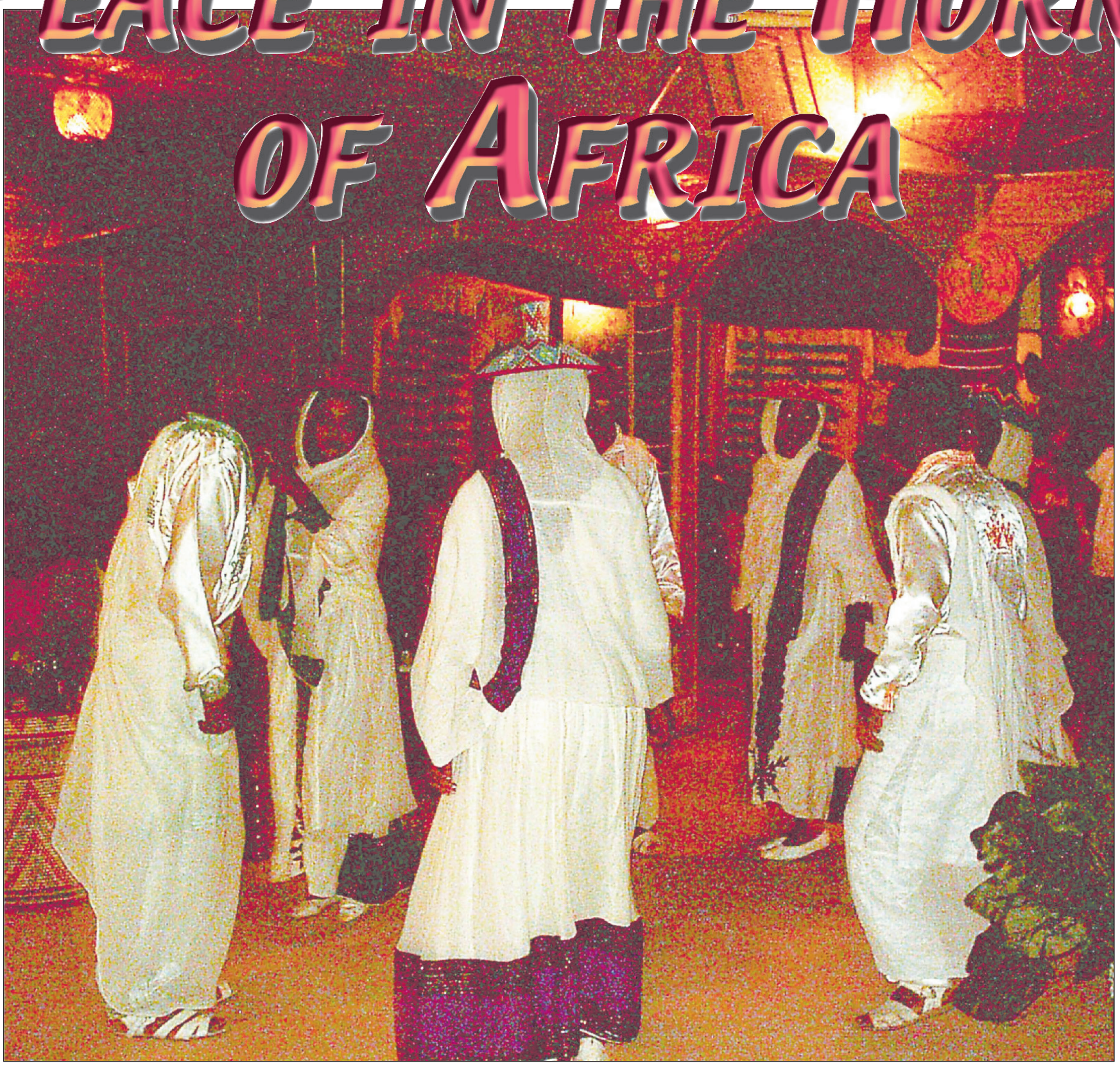
Inside Look

McCALEB INITIATIVE FOR PEACE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2004 | THE CHART | SECTION B

PEACE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA



THE MCCALEB INITIATIVE FOR PEACE • A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO *THE CHART*

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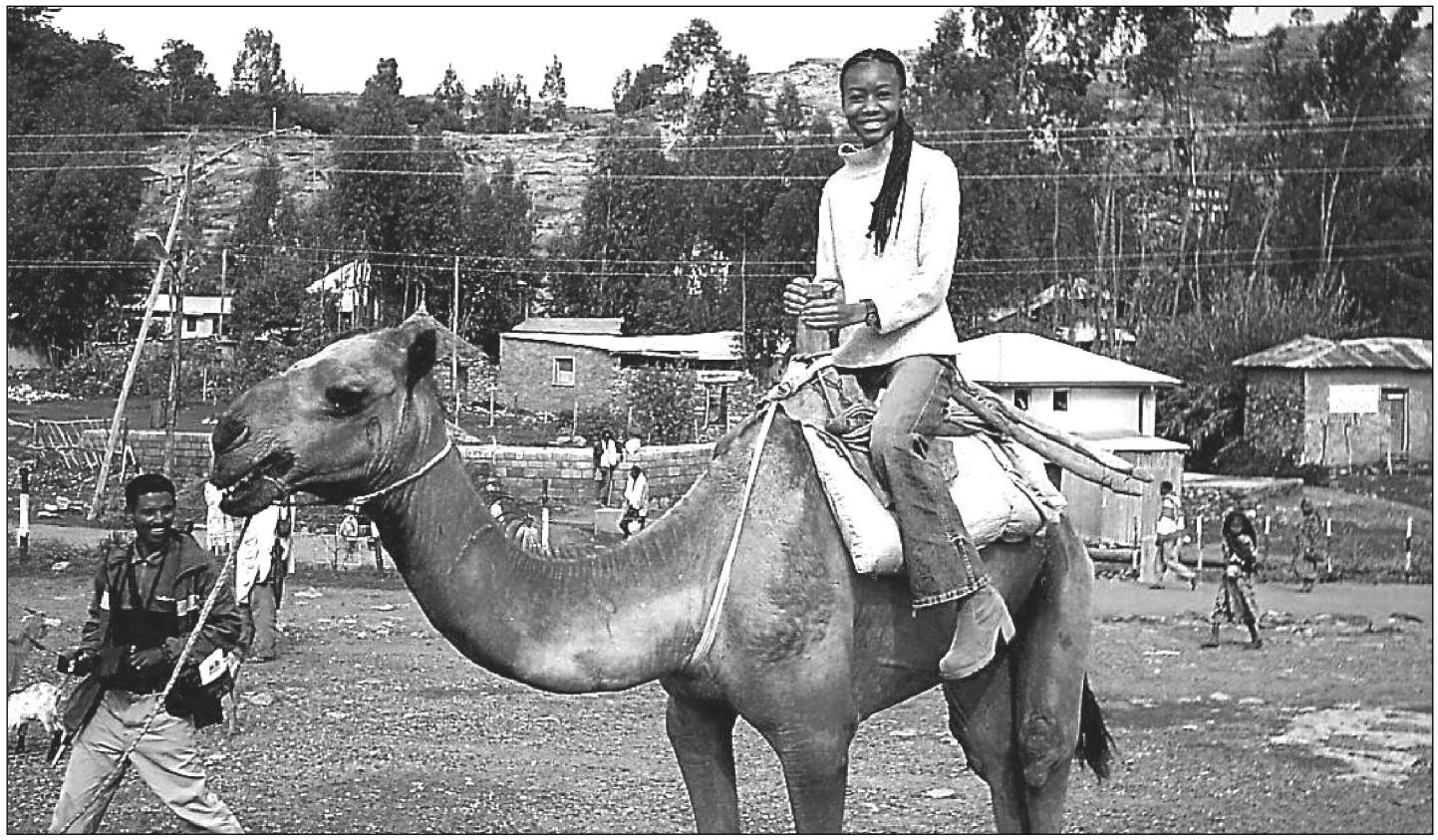

Special to The Chart

Barbra Lukunka, senior international studies major, visits Axum, Ethiopia for part of her McCaleb Initiative for Peace project.

Opportunity knocks at door

Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

Last semester, I was fortunate to receive the McCaleb Initiative for Peace Grant to research the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is a wonderful grant, especially for students who are adventurous and willing to explore the disparate cultures that make this world what it is. Many students have taken full advantage of this grant and researched peace processes in countries as exotic and exciting as India, Costa Rica and even Mexico. For those of us who have taken this opportunity, we owe our many thanks to the McCalebs, notably the late. Kenneth McCaleb, who believed in peace so much he started this fund. I would also like to express my utmost gratitude to his wife Margaret McCaleb and their son Robert McCaleb who have kept this fund going and helped students realize their ambitions.

I would like to thank Missouri Southern and Dr. Chad Stebbins, director of the Institute for international Studies, in particular for encouraging students to pursue this grant and broaden our minds.

I would like to thank Dr. Ann Wyman, assistant professor of political science, for her guidance. I am very grateful for the advice and ideas she gave me in order to make my research complete.

I owe a great deal of thanks to those that helped me with my research in Ethiopia. I appreciate the arrangements that were made for me to speak with the people involved in the peace process.

I am most grateful as well for the people who supplied me with confidential and classified documents.

I understand the difficulty and pressure they all went through in order to help me, and for that I am forever grateful.

Although I am technically an international student from Zambia, Ethiopia is the only home I know. It is a wonderful country with great traditions and culture. Naturally for me it is disturbing to know Ethiopia and Eritrea have had a border dispute that has led to the deaths of thousands of people and completely disturbed the lifestyles of many more. Even though I grew up in Addis Ababa, the capital city, doing a research project there was so amazing in that it felt like I was discovering Ethiopia all over again. I learned many new things about the Ethiopian culture and the people; things I had never bothered to know when I lived there. I improved my Amharic, one of the major Ethiopian languages, and tried learning Tigray, the language spoken in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea. My research helped me see under the surface and explore the diverse culture in order to truly understand the reason for conflict and what could possibly be done to bring about peace.

When I arrived in Ethiopia, I knew what I wanted research, but I did not have a true sense of direction as to what exactly I wanted to achieve. I met many people from the African Union and United Nations who were willing to help me by providing me with documents. During the first few days I understood the only way I could possibly take my Southern readers on this journey in search for peace with me is by doing research on disparate aspects of the peace process and therefore having an eclectic final project.

I chose to look at the peace process from different angles such as: the political angle, legal and humanitarian angle, religious angle, sociological angle and even a historical angle. These angles are relatively different and yet they all are connected by having one common objective — finding the peaceful solution to the dispute between two brotherly countries.

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, is now the home to many Ethiopians deported from Eritrea.

Border war changes lives

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

All of Africa's corners have experienced armed conflict. Southern Africa has faced conflict due to apartheid and freedom fighting; Central Africa is synonymous with ethnic cleansing. West Africa is constantly breeding new *coup d'etat*, and the Horn of Africa has had its share of border disputes. Africa is a rich continent with an abundance of resources, diverse cultures, exotic people and exciting traditions, yet it seems as though it is perpetually facing armed conflict. Wars in Africa have destabilized the economy, politics, social life and much more. In order to understand the true nature of the conflicts in Africa, we must look at the history of some of these countries because many of the conflicts have their roots in the colonial era. Many people praise the colonial era; however, in my opinion, it brought more harm than good in many regions. Some examples of the harm caused include the ethnic cleansing in the Great Lakes region, Southern Africa's apartheid, Nigeria and Cameroon's border dispute, Nigeria's civil war.

The history behind the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea goes back as far as the beginning of the last century. The primary thing that is important to take note of is Ethiopia and Eritrea were once part of the Ethiopian Empire. Ethiopia was once a great empire that stretched as far as Yemen. While many Western European countries were fully engaged in colonialism at the beginning of the 20th Century, Italy decided it did not want to miss out on gaining land in Africa. The Italians were encouraged by the British, who were threatened by French imperialism, to conquer and colonize the great Ethiopian Empire. The Italians were defeated by the Ethiopians; however, after negotiations they were able to control what is now Eritrea. In 1908, the Italians drew up a border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, henceforth controlling Eritrea for nearly half of a century until 1941.

The Italians colonized Ethiopia but were defeated in the famous battle of Adwa, which brought an end to their six-year control of the country. This battle is well known because an army of indigenous Ethiopians equipped with mere spears and few firearms were able to defeat the sophisticated army of Italians. In 1952, Ethiopia and Eritrea were combined into a federation under the United Nations. The Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie annexed Eritrea, stripping away its autonomy. This triggered a three-decade war between the two countries. Even though Eritrea tried to seek help from the international community to implement the U.N. ruling in regards to the federation that was created, the international community chose to be oblivious to its pleas. Emperor Haile Selassie was taken out of power in 1974 by the communist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam. During his regime, Mariam was a very brutal dictator and both Ethiopians and Eritreans suffered under his military rule.

In 1975, the Tigray People's Liberation Front was formed. This group was formed with the ambition to

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Orthodox, Muslim leaders create peace

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

Ethiopia and Eritrea share the same religious beliefs — Christianity and Islam. The dominant type of Christianity in Ethiopia is Eastern Orthodox. In Eritrea, the dominant type of Christianity is Coptic Christianity, which is a branch of the Orthodox Church as well. Coptic Christianity started in Egypt; in fact, Copt is an Arabic word that means Egyptian. There are approximately 50 million adherents of Coptic Christianity, many of whom are in Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Israel.

There is a significant number of Muslims and Christians in both countries. The ratio of Muslims to Orthodox Christians is one-to-one; however, when you talk to the people and ask them what they believe the ratio is, a Muslim will always tell you that there are more Muslims and an Orthodox Christian will tell you that there are more Orthodox Christians.

Religion is such an important part of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Unlike many African countries that were introduced to Christianity through colonization or missionaries, these two countries have known Christianity all along. Islam also has a significant role in the Ethiopian and Eritrean culture.

I remember growing up in Ethiopia and every day I would hear the call for worship from the nearby mosque as well as from the Orthodox Church.

The streets of Addis Ababa exemplify a city embedded in its religious beliefs. Addis Ababa has some elaborate churches and mosques, built in such grandeur and elegant style. Almost all the streets have street vendors who sell pictures of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and crosses.

It is interesting to watch Orthodox Christian Ethiopians walk by an Orthodox Church. They will take the time to stop walking, turn towards the church and bow a few times and make the sign of the cross.

With religion being such an eminent part of both countries, I realized how significant it would be to hear what the religious leaders thought about the current border dispute. My first interview on the subject was with the head of the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church.

The Patriarch of Ethiopia is His Holiness Abune Paulos. Many have accused him of being political, especially since he is known to be close to the President of Ethiopia. Nonetheless, Paulos is highly revered by many.

When I first met Paulos, I walked into a well lit, elaborate room and found him seated in a big white chair with a picture of the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus in her arms behind him. He welcomed me and was willing to give me some insight on the Church's position.

"Ethiopians and Eritreans are one in blood, history and existence," he said. "We are the same people."

Paulos said he thought the Italians were to blame because of their invasion of Eritrea in the late 19th Century.

"Under the Italian rule they (Ethiopians and Eritreans) came into conflict as if they were different ... as if they were not the same people," he said.

I asked Paulos who he believed had started the war in 1998 since both countries refused to admit to it. He said Eritrea was the belligerent force and all along, Ethiopia wanted peace.

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U.N., A.U. step in to try to settle conflict

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

The headquarters of the African Union is located in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

When I started doing the research, I knew that I had to do some reading before conducting my interviews. I met with the head of the African Union Conflict Management Center. We had an extensive discussion about the conflict and then he directed me to the political analysts for the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, who gave me the permission to read some of the classified documents pertaining to the border dispute. During this time, the African Union was holding its one-week-long annual summit. This meant no one would be available for an interview until the summit was over.

This was perfect for me because this gave me a chance to go through the documents given to me to read. I went through resolutions, letters and reports from the U.N. secretary general, the African Union Chairperson, as well as letters from the two presidents Meles Zenawi and Isaias Afwerki and other relevant reports.

Before doing my research, I had the notion that the border dispute was very simple; however, after reading the letters and other documents, I realized the complexity of the conflict. In addition, I drew the conclusion that this conflict was not really about the 1000km (620 mile) frontier or about which country should have the small town of Badme. I surmised that the conflict was more complex than what the public believes.

The most recent conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea started May 6, 1998. This war claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people. The Organization of African Unity, now called the African Union, called for a summit in November of 1998 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso to urge the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean and Ethiopian troops from the border. At this summit, the OAU presented the Technical Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework Agreement and Modalities. Eritrea agreed to the implementation; however, Ethiopia refused because it was not satisfied with the clause in the implementation that stated that the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea be marked based upon the U.N. cartography. The U.N. cartography for African countries is really based upon "pertinent" colonial treaties. I was very discouraged to read this especially since, in my opinion, the borders drawn by the colonial powers on the African continent have been the reason for many conflicts.

By April 2000, Ethiopia and Eritrea were engaged in proximity talks which were a sign of progress. The international community was very involved in the peace process, however, hostilities between the two countries reinitiated on May 12, 2000.

On May 17, 2000 the international community passed resolution No. 1298 under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter which condemned the fighting, demanded a halt to the fighting and sought all states to stop selling the two countries any ammunition. On May 19, 2000, both parties signed the Framework Agreement and Modalities. On June 18, 2000, the cease-fire was signed in Algiers, and the U.N. Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea was formed under resolution No. 1320 of the OAU auspices.

The UNMEE deployed 4000 peacekeepers and other military observers to monitor the Temporary Security Zone.

The TSZ is a 25 km long strip of land that separates the two countries and is to be used by the UNMEE peacekeeping troops as a buffer zone to maintain peace at the frontier. The UNMEE mandate clearly says that it is to monitor the cessation of hostilities and the position of Ethiopian and Eritrean forces once they have redeployed. As well as "coordinate and provide assistance for humanitarian mine-action activities in the TSZ."

Eventually in December 2000 the Peace Accords were signed, and the Boundary and Claims Commissions were established. The Boundary Commission was specifically created to work on drawing up an appropriate border between the two countries. On April 13, 2002, the Boundary Commission stated its ruling, which favored Eritrea; however, instead of abiding by the decision, the two countries have chosen to be intransigent. Ethiopia has refused the border ruling and Eritrea has refused to hold any talks with the international community until the border decision is implemented. This is the reason for the current dormant state of the peace process.

I had the opportunity to talk with Mr. Rodney S. Kiwa, senior political representative and the head of the A.U. Liaison Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The A.U. mission works with the U.N. mission; the latter was created under the auspices of the A.U. This is the first mission that was started by the African Union, and the United Nations was only called upon because the African Union lacks resources. Over some tea, Kiwa and I talked about the conflict and the current stalemate in the peace process. The first thing that I expressed to Kiwa was how much I disagreed with the boundary decision being based upon colonial maps. The African Union was created in 2000 to promote African self-reliance. Kiwa said in 1964 the OAU made the decision to make all border decisions based upon colonial maps. The OAU (and the African Union) has tried to portray itself as an unbiased organization that does not favor one country over the other,

TURN TO **TALKS**, PAGE 11B

Almaz (left) and Yonas (right) are two young Eritreans in Ethiopia. Both said they long to contact their relatives in their home country, but it is illegal to do so.

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

People of warring nations relate opinions of war

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

In Africa, we place a great deal of emphasis on tribalism. When I am in my home country of Zambia, I identify myself as a Bemba or a Nsenga, because these are the two tribes my father and mother are from. To some people from other countries, I am simply a Zambian, and to others I am simply an African.

Ethiopia and Eritrea, much like other African countries, have a number of different tribal groups. It is easy to surmise someone else's ethnic or tribal groups by physical features, the language they speak, and their accents and sometimes by clothing.

Ethiopia and Eritrea have two major tribal groups in common, the Tigray and the Afar. The border dispute is in the middle of the Tigray region, which extends from Ethiopia into Eritrea. In Ethiopia, the Tigrays make up about 32 percent of the population, and in Eritrea they make up about 40 percent.

The biggest tribal group in Eritrea, which makes up 50 percent of the population, is the Tigrinya, a group slightly different from the Tigray tribe. The biggest tribe in Ethiopia is the Amhara tribe whose region is in the central highlands of Ethiopia. Other major Tribal groups in Ethiopia include the Oromo, the Gurage, the Gambella, the Somali, the Sidamo and the Shankella.

When the conflict started in 1998, there was a great deal of fear among the Eritreans who lived in Ethiopia and the Ethiopians who lived in Eritrea. Both governments were engaging in mass deportation of the each other's countrymen and women. I remember some Eritrean people I personally knew who were making plans to run away before the Ethiopian government got to them. Those who had relatives in Eritrea were very worried about how their relatives were being treated.

I decided to go out on the streets of Ethiopia and try to get a general idea from the people about how they felt about the border dispute. With my rudimentary Amharic, I spoke with one Amhara who is a cashier in a store, one Tigray who is a student at an accounting college, and one Gurage who owns a chain of supermarkets in Ethiopia. When I started talking to the Amhara, she said to me she felt the governments were to blame.

"Ethiopians and Eritreans lived together for many years, but the governments are the ones who are wrong, not the people; we are brothers and sisters," she said.

When I asked her what she thought about the Boundary Commission's decision, she seemed ambivalent about the decision.

"The only thing I care about is peace and not the land, but I think Ethiopia needs the land," she said.

The Tigray was quick to point out he believed negotiation was the only way the border dispute would be solved. He told me about his many Eritrean friends who were deported and how he was unsure if he would ever see them again. He manifested a sense of hopefulness because of the international community, notably the United Nations, but he did not share the same sentiment for the African Union.

"The Governments are the ones who are wrong, not the people; we are brothers and sisters."

An Unnamed Amhara

"It (the African Union) has the power to bring change, but they are useless because they don't use their power," he said.

I continued talking to Ethiopians and encountered some who were bitter about the war and some who did not have an opinion.

One of the people I talked to introduced me to two Eritreans. I was quite shocked to run across the Eritreans because for the longest time, I had the misconception all Eritreans were deported out of Ethiopia. I spoke to a young man and a young woman. The young woman's name is Almaz, and the man is Yonas. Almaz is an Orthodox Christian, and Yonas is a Muslim.

They live in Ethiopia alone without their family members because all of their family members were deported. They both long to contact their relatives, but it was impossible because it is basically illegal to contact anyone in Eritrea when you are in Ethiopia. There is no way to make phone calls, send faxes or even letters to Eritrea. Also, there is no direct flight between the two countries. I wondered how they had managed to stay in Ethiopia without being deported, but both refused to make say. Many of the people who were deported from either country were accused of espionage or trying to conspire against the governments.

We talked about the conflict, and it seemed as though both of them were not even sure why there was a conflict.

Yonas said he was not sure which country should have Badme, the land that is being disputed.

Almaz on the other hand, said the land should be given to Eritrea. When I asked her why she felt that way, she did not have an answer, but it was clear she was talking out of pure nationalism. They both agreed the international community should not try to solve Africa's problems. In addition, they both said they have a low opinion of the African Union.

Yonas said he was disappointed with the United States because in his opinion they were supporting Ethiopia because it does not have the strong Arab ties that Eritrea has.

At the end of the interview, they both said that they missed home.

They had grown up in Ethiopia, but they missed being able to go home to Eritrea, especially to see their relatives. I could see the pain in their eyes.

"Maybe the International Red Cross can help those of us who might want to go home," Yonas said.

3 groups maintain laws of war

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

Armed conflict has disturbed the lives of many. Men are killed in combat, women are raped, property is destroyed and children become orphans. Among the many organizations that work to help those that suffer from the effects of war, there are three, the International Community for the Red Cross, Ethiopia-Eritrea Claims Commission and Ethiopian Women's Lawyer Association, whose aim is to maintain the efficacy of law.

I spoke with the Protection Officer of the ICRC, who enlightened me about humanitarian law as well as the role of the ICRC during the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict.

The ICRC can be seen as the organization that monitors and makes sure the Geneva Convention is adhered to by all countries who sign it. The Geneva Convention is the legal document that countries sign as a guide to the proper treatment of prisoners of war, non-combat individuals and ICRC officials. It also gives detailed information on how to handle the bodies of those who die during armed conflict; it also reads families have the right to know about the whereabouts of their family members who die during armed conflict.

The ICRC is the organization that has many humanitarian aid programs, but it is also an organization unlike any other that has the inside information of the human rights violations countries engaged in armed conflict might commit. The symbols of the cross or the crescent signify the safe haven it provides for those whose rights are infringed.

When war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea, ICRC was responsible for reminding the armies what the Geneva Convention policies are, especially concerning the treatment of deportees and prisoners of war. Since Ethiopia had signed the Geneva Convention before the conflict, it was easy for the ICRC to work with the Ethiopian government. Eritrea on the other hand, signed the Geneva Convention after the tensions subsided. The ICRC official said this made it difficult for the ICRC to work with Eritrea and to implement the necessary humanitarian programs.

One of the main programs the ICRC has been working on is the repatriation of deportees and refugees. Crossing the border is virtually impossible unless one has the help of the ICRC. One of the passages the ICRC uses to repatriate people from one country to the other is the Mereb Bridge on

TURN TO **CONFLICT**, PAGE 9B

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

Two Finnish peacekeeing soldiers on duty 24 hours a day at the United Nations Mission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Outside nations help resolve dispute

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

The United States has an immense amount of influence all over the world. It is a country that has taken the time and liberty to be a key player in many international affairs. The United States has had a very significant role throughout the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict. When war erupted in 1998, the vice president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, came to Ethiopia and was joined by a delegate from the United States to find a way to ease the tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In May 1998, the United States, along with Rwanda, came up with the U.S.-Rwandan Plan, which was geared to promoting peace since both countries had excellent relationships with the countries at war. They established some recommendations, which included urging the two countries to commit to resolving the dispute, renouncing force, reducing tension and agreeing on the creation of the border based on colonial treaties and international law.

When the war started, it seemed as though the international community was more than willing to bring about peace. However, with the current stalemate, it seems as though the international community has decided on a "wait-and-see attitude."

I spoke with a senior UNMEE official. To me, it is imperative that the international community, especially countries like the US that have power, produce some kind of pressure in order for the countries to come to a peaceful agreement. It is essential that peace is established because currently the UNMEE is spending close to $200 million U.S. annually to keep its troops deployed at the TSZ. I spoke with the UNMEE official about why the international community, especially the United States, has not put pressure on Ethiopia to accede to the decision made by the Boundary Commission in April 2002.

The UNMEE official said one of his main observations is it is inevitable that Ethiopia is less preoccupied with the conflict than Eritrea. This is because for Eritrea this conflict is about proving its power and showing its frustration with the financial support Ethiopia has gotten from the international donors that have ameliorated infrastructure and development in Ethiopia. His analysis of the speeches given by both parties have shown only 20 percent of the Ethiopian officials' speeches address the conflict while 80 percent of the Eritrean officials' speeches address the conflict. This inevitably adds to the stalemate and difficulty in trying to bring about a peaceful solution to the dispute.

We also examined the international community and its role in the peace conflict. The African Union is an organization that took the head position in trying to establish peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. According to the UNMEE official, the African Union has a very important position because it is "in the good books" (as they say in Zambia) of many African countries. Both Ethiopia and Eritrea have said how much they support the African Union; in addition, they have reiterated how much they prefer the African Union's tradition of negotiation as a mechanism for peace and security. However, its only weakness is it cannot push any country to abide by any recommendations because it should never appear to be a partisan organization. On Sept. 19, 2003, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi issued a document to the United Nations and African Union saying he had no

TURN TO **INTERNATIONAL** PAGE 11B

Landmines remain problem on Ethiopian, Eritrean borders

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

The main humanitarian issue in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict is the plethora of landmines at the border threatening the lives of many. The UNMEE de-mining department has issued various reports relating to the safety of the civilians living near the Temporary Security Zone.

I spoke with a UNMEE official in the humanitarian department about the mine issue and the many problems that have been faced. There are currently a number of de-mining companies from countries such as the United States, South Africa and Kenya working on this region. However, working at the border has not been easy for them.

The mines at the border come from four different wars; from the colonial war, the war of Eritrean independence from Ethiopia, the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia and the recent conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Regardless of when the mines were planted, the fact remains they have severely injured some and killed others. In the last conflict it is estimated a total of 500,000 people were moved from the border in fear of the war and the mines. The main problem the UNMEE official pointed out is there are mines in the region that have not been recorded. This has posed some difficulty for the de-mining workers, as well as for the local population. According to the official, both Ethiopia and Eritrea initially refused to give the UNMEE the maps of where the mines were laid. The two countries were refractory for a simple reason: they did not have maps for all the mines that had been laid. In the town of Shilalo, Eritrea, there have been some anti-tank mines that have been discovered that are not mapped. This is also the case in the town of Senafe, Ethiopia.

Many of the mines that have injured people are unexploded ordnances. UXOs are munitions that have been fired, but remain unexploded. Other types of mines include the anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. In Eritrea alone there are about 26 types of mines from different countries in the world such as the United States, the former Soviet Union, Belgium, Yugoslavia, China and Germany.

Many of the mines have been laid near the capital city of Eritrea, Asmara. About 10 km from Asmara a man was driving a truck when he drove over an anti-tank mine. This incident happened in an area that was not recorded or marked on a map as having mines. Individuals between ages seven and 14 have been the most affected by land mines. In June 2004, a 6-year-old boy saw a suspicious object. He tried to handle the object in question, which exploded in his face and killed him. Around the same time, a farmer was digging when his ax hit a land mine that exploded and killed him.

How can these casualties be avoided? The UNMEE official said the main preventive mechanism has been spreading awareness and educating the people about land mines. For those who are not reached during the educational seminars, there are plenty of signs, written in the native languages, in the area telling people where not to go and which areas have land mines. The official said civilians have learned to avoid some roads that may not be mapped as having mines, because of casualties that may have occurred on the particular road.

When one comes into contact with a mine, they either lose their lives or are severely injured. Many people have lost their limbs due to mines. The Red Cross has a Prosthetics Orthopedics Center. This center enables many who have lost their limbs to receive artificial limbs for about $2. I was invited to the center and given a chance to speak with some people who had been hurt by mines at the border. I walked in the center and saw some people who had no limbs at all. They were all sitting in a room waiting to receive their limbs.

I met three young men who had served in the Ethiopian army. Their names are Getachou Gobeze, Babeker Amdan and Isac Kalifa. Gobeze and Amdan are 25 years old, and Kalifa is 24. All three men were injured during combat in June 2000. Gobeze and Amdan were immediately taken to the army hospital in Addis Ababa in the army helicopter. After a while they were told about the Orthopedics Center where they received artificial limbs. Gobeze was shot; however, Amdan and Kalifa were injured by land mines. All three of them were injured in the legs.

TURN TO **MINES**, PAGE 9B

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

Alpha Oumar Konare, chairperson of the African Union and former president of Mali, gives a speech to an audience at the Gender Policy Conference on equality during the annual A.U. summit.

African Union encourages new discussions

By Barbra Lukunka
Chart Reporter

On June 28, I was invited by the African Union Senior Social Affairs Officer to attend the A.U. Gender Policy conference.

When I walked into the room, I found it packed with women from all over the world, representing different international organizations. I had a chance to listen to the chairperson of the African Union, who is the former president of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konare, give a speech centered on the promotion of gender equality in Africa. I had not made any arrangements to speak with the chairperson about the conflict; however, his speech made me realize I needed to find a way to talk to him.

One day I decided to take my chances and go to the "cabinet" where Konare works. I found his personal assistant, a man I had been introduced to earlier that week. I told him about how much I wanted to speak with Konare. I understood Konare was a busy man, but I was determined to see him. While I was busy explaining to the personal assistant what I needed, Konare walked out of his office. His personal assistant introduced me to him, and I explained why I wanted to see him. I was so impressed at how accommodating he was when he invited me into his office to talk about the peace process.

He started out by talking about the position of the African Union in this conflict. He said even though most conflicts are complicated, the Ethiopia-Eritrea is especially complicated because the people who are fighting are basically the same people. They had fought together, side by side, to oust Mengistu but were now fighting each other.

"They are brothers and sisters who are fighting, and we all know that family disputes are the hardest to solve," Konare said. "That is why we as their neighbors should help them."

He said the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea was preoccupying the African Union. Both countries have said continuously they do not want war. However, Konare expressed his belief that if a solution was not found, the risk of war would always be pending. He said due to the nature of the war, it was necessary for the African Union to encourage dialogue between the two countries. Since the border decision was declared in April 2002, it is clear to the African Union that a legal decision that has to be adhered to has been made. On the other hand, Konare said even though legal decisions are made, they are sometimes difficult to abide by — especially if one party believes the decision is not just. He emphasized the fact the border issue was affecting other issues such as economic trade and the movement of the people.

"Even if there is a demarcation of the border, if there is a hindrance of movement in terms of trade as well as people, the border is worthless," Konare said. "Addis is the capital of Africa because it is the headquarters of the African Union. If the conflict restarts, the A.U. might be a target."

According to Konare, the two countries are in a strategic location because peace in Ethiopia and Eritrea could mean peace in Somalia, Sudan and Northern Uganda. With peace, Konare believes the Nile River, which flows from Ethiopia to Egypt, can be handled well and provide for other countries. Peace in this region could mean less arms trade from the Indian Ocean into

TURN TO **CHAIRPERSON**, PAGE 9B

BORDER:

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take Mariam out of power. Tigray is a region north of Ethiopia. It has a distinctive tribal group called the Tigrays. This region borders Eritrea; in addition, one of the major tribal groups in Ethiopia and Eritrea are Tigray. Therefore, Ethiopia and Eritrea share a common language, Tigrinya, as well as a tribal group. Tigrays in the north of Ethiopia and Eritreans suffered the most during Mengistu's rule. With the support of other tribal groups, the TPLF grew and became the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. This group sought the help of the Eritreans to overthrow Mengistu in exchange for Eritrea's independence. In 1993, Eritrea received its independence from Ethiopia and the leader of the EPRDF, a Tigray by the name of Meles Zenawi, became the President of Ethiopia. His cousin Isaias Afwerki became the ruler of Eritrea. Even though Eritrea had gained its independence, the border between the two countries was an issue of disagreement.

In 1998, fighting broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea over the border and a small, dry peace of land called Badme, which is located at the border.

One of the main goals for this research was to talk to people who were affected by the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The main objective was to talk to people whose lives had changed due to the 1998 border dispute. While discussing my research with some Ethiopian friends, they told me to go to an area in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, called Kirkos. Apparently this was a place where many of the Ethiopians who once lived in Eritrea reside. In 1998, both countries were involved in deporting each other's nationals. Force was used by both sides to deport the people.

I went to Kirkos and found a young man that was willing to tell me his story. He had been affected by the conflict in 1991.

His name is Tekie Kidane, and he is a Tigray. He lived in Eritrea for seven years and came back to Ethiopia in 1991 when the war started. He was a student in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, and he said life was wonderful in Eritrea. When the war started, inevitably everything changed for many people.

"The Mengistu military leaders forced us out of Eritrea," Kidane said.

He said he had many friends and family members in Eritrea; however, he does not know where most of them are.

"I had a good friend who fled to Sudan," Kidane said. "I have not heard from him for a long time now, maybe he is dead."

Many of the people who fled the belligerence during this time left their homes to go to neighboring countries, such as Sudan, to live as refugees. Now Kidane lives in Addis Ababa and works as a postman.

"I don't care about what happens between Ethiopia and Eritrea," he said. "I have a small salary, and I lead a simple life ... My life was better in Eritrea."

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

Many people stand in front of one of the many Eastern Orthodox Churches in Addis Ababa.

PEACE:

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"The Ethiopian government has sought for peace as a way to solve the dispute, but for the longest time, the international community ignored their pleas," he said.

Paulos said after being ignored for so long by the international community, the Ethiopians were disappointed. However, the Norwegians came to their help when they recommended peace be sought through religion. The Christian and Muslim religious leaders in Ethiopia were encouraged to speak with their counterparts in Eritrea.

The church leaders from both countries met with the Norwegians in Oslo and initiated the peace talks. Paulos said the negotiations and peace talks were very fruitful in Oslo. The religious leaders became very close; in addition, they met each other in their respective countries. The religious leaders were influencing the peace initiatives, and it seemed as though things were heading toward the right direction until, Paulos said, the border decision was made in The Hague.

"The decision from The Hague was not acceptable to the Ethiopian people ... but Ethiopians still want a peaceful solution," Paulos said.

The Patriarch was quick to share his fear of a possible escalation of war due to the border decision. He said he thinks the Ethiopian government was doing all it could possibly do for long lasting peace.

The Orthodox Church carried out some assessments of the refugee situation and those that were being resettled.

"We wanted to follow the footsteps of the refugees and appeal to the donor nation," Paulos said.

He said money is essential to help abate the humanitarian crises between the two countries, however the other remedy he believes in is reconciling with the people's heart for them to embrace each other as brothers and sisters again.

"Ethiopia and Eritrea don't want war," Paulos said. "They are homesick for each other, and I have seen them crying for each other."

We ended the interview with him telling me that he prayed for the international community to be more generous so more lives could be saved.

It was wonderful hearing those words from him. But at the same time, I wanted to know what the Muslims thought about the situation. I went to speak with, Haji Yesuf Ali Yassin, secretary general of the Islamic Affairs Council for Ethiopia.

The interview was brief but insightful.

"Islam is a universal religion that is driven by peace," Yassin said.

In addition, he said the Islamic Council is a clear advocate for peace. Like Paulos, he pointed out the Eritreans and Ethiopians are the same people that share historical, social and economic relationships. He also made the same point as Paulos that the government of Ethiopia was not willing to use armed force in order to resolve the conflict, but the border dispute had been worsened by the border decision made by the Boundary Commission.

"The only way peace will be seen between the two countries is if there is an implementation of the border that will be just and ensure long lasting peace," Yassin said.

Unlike Paulos, Yassin believes the international community has been helpful. The council has made the effort to learn about what the UNMEE is doing and has held meetings with them.

Yassin said the Islamic Affairs Council formed an executive board to help the peace process. This executive board, along with the Orthodox Church, has been involved in peace negotiations with the religious leaders in Eritrea. They went to Mekelle, the Tigray capital, with the Orthodox Church leaders to discuss the issue of the deportees and refugees.

Like Paulos, Yassin said reconciling with the hearts of the people is vital. The Islamic leaders have preached peace in their prayers. The call for prayer five times a day never neglects to encourage the people to harbor peace in their hearts.

CONFLICT:

From Page 6B

the Mereb River.

The ICRC is not the only organization involved in upholding the law regarding the conflict. The international community created two commissions in December 2000 when the Peace Agreement was signed; the Boundary and Claims Commissions. The Boundary Commission was created for the purpose of creating a border between the two countries that was just, based on international law. The Claims Commission on the other hand is the commission that takes into consideration all the claims filed by both countries and decides which country is liable for the claims. The Claims Commission is composed of five commissioners, four Americans and one Belgian.

Thomas Snider is an American lawyer currently representing the Ethiopian government in its dealing with the Claims Commission. Snider, 29, has been representing the Ethiopian government since 2000. He works for a law firm in Washington, D.C. called Hunton and Williams. Snider's job is to present a legal plea on behalf of the Ethiopian government for anything the Claims Commission says Ethiopia is liable for.

According to Snider, the Claims Commission does not take into consideration individual claims; it considers group claims.

"The way that claims are approached is by looking for patterns," Snider said.

The first claims the commission dealt with was the prisoner of war claims. In July 2003, the commission issued its decision concerning the prisoners of war, and it seemed as though Ethiopia was favored in the decision. Eritrea was found liable for severe violation, as well as failure to prevent the killings of prisoners of war at the war front. In contrast, the Ethiopian government was liable for merely delaying the repatriation of prisoners of war. The next claims the commission dealt with were those pertaining to the noncombatants who were affected by conflict, such as those who were displaced, raped, hurt by landmines and other war induced casualties. Snider's job is to do some research and write a legal plea for the Ethiopian government.

The ICRC and the Claims Commission have been helpful in the conflict. There is, however, one other organization I was impressed with.

The Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association is an organization that has tried to promote women's rights. I was interested in its role in the conflict and how it helped women who had their rights violated during and after the conflict.

Meaza Ashenafi, the founder and executive director of the organization, said Ethiopia and Eritrea faced the same problems in terms of women facing violations during the conflict. I asked her to describe the women who had been raped. She said the majority of them were women who worked as domestic maids in either Ethiopia or Eritrea. The organization receives about 50 cases per day, and a small number of these cases are of women who were abused or violated during armed conflict.

"We have not had a lot of cases pertaining to women being raped or violated during armed conflict because many of these women are not educated, and they are unaware of the legal help they can get from organizations like the Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association," Ashenafi said.

She said one of the cases the EWLA worked on was about a girl who was raped at the border. The young girl was a maid in Eritrea, and when the conflict started in 1998 she was deported. During her flight as a deportee from Eritrea, trying desperately to reach Ethiopia, she was raped by man who impregnated her.

"It was hard to work on this case because the girl didn't know who the man was," Ashenafi said.

Even though the organization is independent, it has collaborated with the government to promote peace. Before the war started, the EWLA and the government held a peace rally of more than 100,000 women.

These three organization, the ICRC, Claims Commission and the EWLA, are important because they attempt to bring justice and ensure those who violate human rights and commit war crimes during and after armed conflict do not go unpunished.

War brings many horrifying circumstances, but that does not mean individuals, not even the government of any country, should go unpunished for the atrocities they are responsible for.

ESCAPED HOME

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

These three women fled their comfortable lives in Asmara, Eritrea to live in their home country of Ethiopia. They live as street beggars because of the conflict in 1991.

MINES:

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The day Kalifa was injured, he was fighting in Badme, the town contested by the two governments. He remembers shooting at the Eritreans when a landmine exploded and ripped off his entire leg below his knee. He experienced excruciating pain, and he said he had never been so scared in his life.

"I was so scared, and my family was also very scared and sad for me," Kalifa said.

When he was injured, an army official drove him to Gondar, a town near the border in the Tigray region. He was taken to the army hospital where he stayed for one month before being taken to Addis Ababa. He was advised to go to the Orthopedic Center to receive an artificial limb. All three of these men said they were not angry about the war, and they did not harbor any resentment for what had happened to them because it was their job to serve their country.

They have all gone back to school since they cannot be part of the army. Gobeze is studying marketing;

Amdan and Kalifa, on the other hand, never had the chance to go to school when they were younger, so they have decided to go to elementary school. They have new hope and inspiration thanks to Red Cross.

CHAIRPERSON:

From Page 7B

other parts of Africa, and it could also encourage the fight against terrorism. Peace in the Horn of Africa could mean peace in the Great Lakes of Africa, where millions were slaughtered for the purpose of ethnic cleansing. Peace in the Horn of Africa could benefit the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country that has been in complete anarchy and cacophony due to constant armed conflict.

Konare said peace will be perennial in Africa only when Africans look at the issues they are facing with a democratic vision. He said African conflicts need to be solved with the African Union and New Partnership for Africa's Development vision. He added the African Union was in search of peace, democracy and development throughout the regions of Africa.

I was curious to know what his thoughts were concerning the West, and the aid it provides to Africa.

"It would be ideal if Africans could rely on themselves," Konare said.

He said Africa was on the path toward self-reliance. For example, the mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea is the first mission started by the African Union; it is only controlled by the United Nations because the African Union lacks resources.

"The A.U. is helping the U.N. with the Ethiopia-Eritrea Mission so that the U.N. can help Africa," Konare said

Kimfe Kidane (second from left) and his coworkers stand outside Kidane's furniture shop where they have all started their new lives in Ethiopia after leaving Eritrea.

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

Eritrea, Ethiopia force people to leave homes

By Barbra Lukunka

Chart Reporter

The people that have caused much concern in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict are the deportees. Forty thousand Ethiopians left Eritrea, and 50,000 Eritreans left Ethiopia whether forcefully or voluntarily. The whole concept of deportation is bewildering. Deportation in the two countries started when the war broke out in 1998 because both countries were suspicious of each other and believed the other's nationals were conducting acts of espionage.

Many people were rounded up, usually by force; they were told to leave all their belongings, and they were put on a bus heading to their "home countries." This was horrendous because many people who were deported had built their entire lives in the country they were being forced to leave.

Addis Ababa has a few Ethiopian deportees in Eritrea; however, 90 percent of the deportees now live in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. The majority of them live in a town called Adigrat, but a growing number of them are going to the capital city of the Tigray region, Mekelle.

I traveled to Mekelle, a town of about 100,000 people and met with Birru Beyene, who works for U.N. Children's Fund. Beyene took me to the local Kebele district government, where we asked for permission to interview some of the deportees. Mekelle has about 10,000 deportees who lived in Eritrea. Many of them left Eritrea by force, and others have crossed the border voluntarily. They are required to stop in the town of Adwa where they are screened and registered and given the liberty to go to their hometowns.

The day I went looking for deportees to interview was probably the most depressing day of my research work. That day I heard some very disturbing stories that can make one contemplate the horrors of war and how it brings more problems than it solves. Beyene took me to a furniture store where I encountered Kimfe Kidane. Kidane is a Tigray who experienced harsh treatment in Eritrea. He seemed so bitter and hurt from what had happened to him, and he was willing to give the names of all those that made his life literally a living hell. Kidane is a 40-year-old man that lived and worked in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea.

He said he had a wonderful life in Eritrea, but when the war started everything went wrong for him. The Tigrays from Ethiopia that lived in Eritrea became a major target. I assume this is because the government of Ethiopia is headed by Tigrays. Furthermore, the majority of Ethiopians in Eritrea were Tigray.

Kidane said four policemen went to his house and shouted for him to go back to Ethiopia. They came in, took all his belongings and terrorized him and his family. These four men were sent by a policewoman. She ordered the policemen to make the lives of all the Ethiopians in Eritrea miserable. Kidane decided to leave his house with his family and hide in the factory where he worked. His manager allowed him to stay there, but the conditions there were unbearable for them so they decided to go back home. He went to a few policemen he knew and gave them money so they could warn him if the other policemen were coming after him. The policemen came back to him after a week and told him the other policemen sent by the policewomen were coming to kill him. When he heard this, he moved to another neighborhood in Asmara where he lived with a close Eritrean friend.

Kidane lived with this friend for a long period of time. His friend advised him to go back to work so he could support his family. The manager at the factory allowed him to work. Even though having a job and living with a friend seemed to work for him, he was living in perpetual fear.

One day while working, a nail went into his eye and injured it. The manager quickly put him in a car and rushed him to the hospital. When he arrived at the hospital he was asked for an ID card. Since Ethiopians carried a particular ID card, the hospital worker was able to tell Kidane was not Eritrean. The hospital refused to treat his injured eye because of his nationality. His manager drove him to a pharmacy, where he was also denied medical treatment. His friend later brought him some painkillers, but Kidane is now blind in his left eye.

After a while, two policemen found Kidane and told him that they had come to kill him. They said he was a target because he was suspected of sabotaging an Eritrean fighter plane. The two policemen approached Kidane, made him open his mouth and placed a gun in it. Even though they had been ordered to kill him, they told him they were willing to spare his life if he gave them money. He gave them both 4,000 Birr, which is equivalent to approximately $500. They spared his life, but after that day they kept coming to him for money in exchange for his life.

Kidane and his wife made arrangements to leave Eritrea. They left with about $2,000 U.S. for Yemen. From Yemen, they were able to get a direct flight to Ethiopia. One of their sons was already in Ethiopia; however, three remained in Eritrea. One of his children is half Eritrean so she remained in Asmara with her mother. His son and daughter were arrested after he left and were only able to later join their family with the help of ICRC. In Addis Ababa, Kidane told the Ethiopian government about his experience. He was given about $200 U.S., and he also got a loan to start his furniture business in his birth town of Mekelle. He said life in Eritrea was much easier and much better than life in Ethiopia. Even though he feels this way, Kidane said he would never return to Eritrea.

"Whatever happens, I will never go back to Eritrea," he said. "Instead, I would rather jump in the lake. I won't even allow any of my grandchildren or their children to go to Eritrea."

All the men who work with Kidane are deportees. They were all accused of political propaganda and conspiring against the Eritrean government. They left their entire lives in Eritrea in order to start life in their home country, a country they hardly know.

TALKS:

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but rather unites Africa instead of dividing it.

Kiwa said he believed the main problem with the peace process involves a misunderstanding.

"To understand the situation we must understand that there is a difference between delimitation and demarcation," he said.

He explained the two countries had initially agreed to the delimitation of the border — the imaginary line drawn on the map. However, Ethiopia has refused to comply with the demarcation, which is the physical marking of the border. Ethiopia criticized the Boundary Commission for not taking into consideration the human geography. There are many people who live at the border of Ethiopia and Eritrea who are unaware of the meaning of a border. Those who are aware of a border are not content with being told that they should be Eritrean when in actuality they want to be Ethiopian or vise versa. I was intrigued at how the situation had gotten to this point. Surely there must have been some kind of dialogue or way for each side to express their concerns.

"These two countries have parallel views," Kiwa said.

He also said the two countries saw the process of demarcation differently. The Eritreans have taken a very legalistic approach and have preferred to comply with the Boundary Commissions decision. Ethiopia on the other hand has preferred to negotiate and hold dialogues concerning the decision.

Kiwa said what is needed is initiation of dialogues at the highest political levels for both states. However, Eritrea has completely refused to start any type of negotiation. When the secretary general of the United Nations tried to send his Special Envoy Axworthy, the Eritrean government refused to see him.

In my opinion, that was a bad move on the part of the Eritrean government because they are getting a reputation as a refractory state.

"If we are to obtain long lasting peace, demarcation should be free will," Kiwa said. "Both parties must agree to impose a solution."

His statement is true and would be ideal if the two countries could see eye to eye.

RELIGIOUS LEADER

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

His Holiness Abune Paulos is the patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Ethiopia.

NATIONS:

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intentions of working with the Boundary Commission. The United States, European Union and United Nations said Ethiopia should accede to the decision. The African Union chose not to make any statements in fear of being seen as partisan. But the Eritrean government saw the African Union's actions as biased because to them by not saying anything, they were silently supporting Ethiopia.

"The only country that can be influential in the Horn of Africa is the U.S.," the UNMEE official said.

He believes strongly the United States can achieve results.

"Ethiopia is a strategic country for the United States in so many ways, due to its land mass, population size (68 million as opposed to Eritrea's mere four million), geographic location and the growing acceptance of democracy," the official said.

He said to the United States and the European Union, Zenawi is the best thing that has happened to Ethiopia. Zenawi is known to be an intelligent man who has claimed to embrace democracy. He was the first to mention his eagerness to fight terrorism, and he is motivated to be part of any development programs for his country.

Eritrea has not neglected to express its disappointment with the United States as a mediator because it seems as though the United States favors Ethiopia. It is easy to see this because the United States has often supported Ethiopia above any country in Africa. Fifty percent of the aid that goes to Africa from the United States goes to Ethiopia. In 1994, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the former U.N. Secretary General, expressed his disappointment with the international community for neglecting Eritrea and not providing aid. Eritrea has tried to get "in the good books" of the United States by also saying it would fight terrorism in its country. Nonetheless, both countries have accused each other of terrorism. This is a tactic used by both sides to undermine each others ties with the United States.

The UNMEE official said he did not think the United States believed the claims of terrorism. It is important to note, however, there are terrorists in the region, especially those coming from Somalia.

The official also spoke of Arab nations' influence in the conflict.

Ethiopia and Eritrea both have a one-to-one ratio of Christians to Muslims. In addition, Eritrea has expressed its ambition of being part of the Arab League. According to the official, the Arab countries are currently too involved with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq and their own internal problems to come to Eritrea's rescue. Libya is the only country to show support for Eritrea by supplying Eritrea with arms and other types of support.

Israel also has a strong interest in the Horn of Africa. Its main interests lie in its desire to control the Red Sea and keep it from being completely under Arab control. Furthermore, Ethiopia has a historical connection with Israel because of the Ethiopian Jews, also known as the Felashas.

It is necessary to have peace in this region. Pressure from the international community is the main solution. It is disappointing the countries and organizations with the most impact have failed to pull the peace process out of its stalemate. The two countries have also remained very difficult to work with.

Barbra Lukunka/The Chart

The 32 ft. tall fallen obelisk in Axum was the tallest created in Ethiopia. Two other obelisks were erected in Axum. One still stands today, and the other was taken to Rome.

Ancient city holds relics of past glory

By Barbra Lukunka

Chart Reporter

After visiting the city of Mekelle, I traveled further north to a town near the border called Axum. Axum is a small town that is hardly developed but contains the historical splendor of Ethiopia and the Tigray region.

I stayed in a hotel that was built on a hill and overlooks the city of Axum. From the hotel I could see the great obelisks, which are the signature of the town of Axum. They were erected more than 1,000 years ago, and nobody knows why. They were all carved out of one single stone each, which is fascinating because of their size. The one that remains erect in Axum is 23 ft tall; the second largest was stolen by the Italians and is in Rome; it is 28 ft tall. The largest one is 32 ft tall; however, it fell to the ground next to the one that remains standing.

These structures portray a creative and flourishing civilization. Much like other historic Ethiopian cities, Axum is considered a holy city. The locals live in tranquility as they enjoy their simple lives centered on religion.

Ethiopia was initially a confederation of kingdoms ruled by the Amhara tribe in the central highlands, the Oromo in the South, and the Tigray in the North into Eritrea. The Axumite Kingdom within the Tigray region was one of the most prosperous because it extended not only into Eritrea, but to Yemen as well. The region was fully engaged in trade with Egypt, Arabia, Persia and India.

While in Axum, I had a guide who drove me around to all the historical sites. He took me to see remains of palaces of some of the Great Kings of Ethiopia. We looked at the ruins of palaces more than 1,000 years old. The palaces were made of stone. My guide said stone was widely used in the kingdom, and elephants were used to transport the stones from the mountains to the town.

He took me to Queen Sheba's palace. She is mentioned in the Bible as well as the Quran as a powerful Queen. Many Ethiopians believe she is the link between the Felashas (Ethiopian Jews) and Israel. The Felashas have often considered themselves the lost tribe of Israel in Diaspora, and many of them have returned home to Israel. Queen Sheba has many names, the Ethiopians call her Makeda, and in the Quran, she is called Bilgis. Her story is known to many. Many believed she traveled to Israel to visit King Solomon of Israel. The King immediately fell in love with her and tricked her into sleeping with him. She left Israel pregnant with his child, Menelik. When she left, the elders of Israel left with Sheba as ordered by the King, and they secretly took the Ark of the Covenant with them.

There is a church in Axum that is said to harbor the Ark of the Covenant. The ark is locked in a room by a priest who has vowed to keep the door closed. Many people have tried talking to the priest to persuade him to open the door, but he has never relented. My guide told me about a few Israelis who went to Axum and tried to steal the Ark of the Covenant. They were imprisoned for trying to steal it and deported back to Israel.

I went to the town museum. It is a very small museum that has many ruins of pottery work that are being put together. There are many statues carved from stone in the museum, but most impressive are the bronze and gold coins used by the ancient kings. Many of the coins have inscriptions on them written in Greek or Ge'ez, the ancient language from which many of the languages in Ethiopia are derived. I was fascinated by what I found in Axum. The city of Axum is backward in regards to modern times, but it is a city that has a glorious history.

Ethiopia may be one of the poorest countries in Africa today; however, in the past it was one of the richest. The Ethiopians are a proud people who have held on to their history. Their history plays an enormous role in their self-identification. Some African countries are unable to trace their histories before the colonial era; thus producing a certain crisis of self-identity.

Peace in the Horn of Africa is imperative, not only to promote stability, but to preserve the remains of a truly authentic African history.

Visiting Axum was a perfect way for me to end my stay in Ethiopia.